

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 AF-10 SOE-02 AID-05 CEA-01 COME-00
EB-08 DOE-11 INT-05 OMB-01 OES-07 STR-07 TRSE-00
ACDA-12 NRC-05 /158 W
-----005237 071645Z /46

R 071400Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 935
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ANKARA 1722

USEEC

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, TU, IR, US
SUBJECT: TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS

REF: A) ANKARA 1570 (NOTAL), B) STATE 55731, C) ANKARA 1657

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: TURKISH MFA OFFICIAL SAYS IRANIAN DIPLOMATS
IN ANKARA HAVE STATED GOI INTENTION TO IMPROVE TURKISH-IRANIAN
RELATIONS. BECAUSE OF HISTORY OF FALSE STARTS TURKS ARE SKEPTICAL
BUT PREPARED TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO IRANIAN INITIATIVES. IN
EMBASSY'S VIEW THE EFFORT TO IMPROVE BILATERAL RELATIONS
BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WILL BE BURDENED ON TURKISH SIDE BY
TURKISH SUSPICIONS OF IRANIAN INTENTIONS AND THE NOT-SO-
LATENT HISTORIC RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO PEOPLES. TURKISH
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STABILITY IS IN IRAN'S INTEREST--AND OURS. PREFERENTIAL
ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SUPPLY OF OIL WOULD HELP TURKEY AND MIGHT
BE FIRST STEP IN COMPREHENSIVE EFFORT TO IMPROVE BILATERAL
RELATIONS. END SUMMARY

2. DURING CONVERSATION MARCH 1 WITH MFA DIRECTOR MID-EAST
AND AFRICAN AFFAIRS, FARUK CELILOGLU, (REF A) CONCERNING JALLOUD

VISIT, EMBOFF ASKED FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT STATUS OF TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS. CELILOGLU SAID THAT HE HAD RECENTLY MET WITH NEWLY-ARRIVED COUNSELOR OF THE IRANIAN EMBASSY WHO HAD SPOKEN VERY OPTIMISTICALLY AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY ABOUT POSSIBILITIES FOR AN EXPANDED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE IRANIAN COUNSELOR SAID THAT HE WAS PUZZLED BY THE STRAINED AND RESTRICTED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, AND THAT HE INTENDED TO UNDERTAKE AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION.

3. CELILOGLU SAID HE TOLD THE IRANIAN THAT HE AGREED WITH HIS ASSESSMENT; HOWEVER, OVER THE COURSE OF THE LAST DECADE HE HAD HEARD LITERALLY DOZENS OF SIMILAR ASSESSMENTS MADE BY BOTH IRANIANS AND TURKS. THE RESULT OF THE RECOGNITION THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES SHOULD BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH A CLOSE AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP HAD BEEN SEVERAL FALSE STARTS WHICH HAD PRODUCED LITTLE EXCEPT SOME RESIDUAL BITTERNESS.

4. BOTH IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH IRANIAN COUNSELOR AND WITH EMBOFF, CELILOGLU SAID HE COULD OFFER NO GOOD EXPLANATION FOR THE FAILURE OF THE TWO COUNTRIES TO DEVELOP A BETTER RELATIONSHIP. NEVERTHELESS, BECAUSE OF THE HISTORY OF THE PAST FEW YEARS, HE COULD NOT BE OPTIMISTIC THAT A MORE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP WAS ON THE HORIZON.

5. DESPITE THIS, CELILOGLU SAID, THE GOT WOULD TRY TO TAKE
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ADVANTAGE OF ANY DISPLAY OF GOI INTEREST IN A MORE PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP. HE SAID THAT THE NEW IRANIAN AMBASSADOR IN ANKARA HAD TOLD SENIOR MFA OFFICIALS THAT HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY THE SHAH TO MAKE A PARTICULAR EFFORT TO DEVELOP A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT. FOR HIS PART CELILOGLU BELIEVES AN IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP IS POSSIBLE, BUT A DRAMATIC BREAKTHROUGH SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED.

6. COMMENT: CELILOGLU'S CAUTION REFLECTS A DEEP-SEATED TURKISH SKEPTICISM THAT THE IRANIANS WILL UNDERTAKE ANY ACTIVITIES WHICH WILL STRENGTHEN TURKEY. WE BELIEVE THAT THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR OF THE IRANIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON DESCRIBED THE SITUATION VERY SUCCINCTLY WHEN HE SAID THAT TURKISH ISOLATION AND AN INWARD-LOOKING SENSE OF NATIONALISM AND PRIDE, PLUS THE HISTORY OF OTTOMAN AND PERSIAN COMPETITION, HAVE CREATED A RATHER DISTANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO NEIGHBORS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ANKARA 1722

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7. THE EMERGENCE OF IRAN AS A WEALTHY AND POTENTIALLY POWERFUL NEIGHBOR HAS HAD A DISQUIETING EFFECT ON MANY TURKS. UNTIL RECENT YEARS, THE TURKS HAD GENERALLY ASSUMED THAT THEY WERE AND WOULD REMAIN WITHOUT RIVAL AS A MID-EAST POWER. THE DIFFICULT EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT TO THE FACT THAT IRAN HAS BECOME A MAJOR MIDDLE POWER (WITH THE POTENTIAL, THEY FEAR, OF REPLACING TURKEY AS THE FULCRUM OF US SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE AREA) HAS BEEN COMPLICATED BY WHAT TURKS SEE AS A CALCULATED REFUSAL BY THE IRANIANS TO ASSIST TURKEY IN ANY WAY. THE FAILURE OF IRAN TO SUPPLY TURKEY SIGNIFICANT QUANTITIES OF OIL-- LET ALONE SUPPLY IT ON FAVORABLE TERMS--THEY SEE AS SOLID EVIDENCE THAT IRAN WANTS A WEAK TURKEY.

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8. PERHAPS IN FRUSTRATION, THE TURKS HAVE TENDED TO FANTASIZE ABOUT THE BARGAINING POWER THEIR GEOGRAPHIC POSITION GIVES THEM VIS-A-VIS THE IRANIANS. AS A RESULT, DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS THEY HAVE ATTEMPTED TO MILK AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE FROM

TRUCK TRANSIT FEES. IN THE PROCESS, THEY HAVE AGGRAVATED
TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS AND APPARENTLY OVERPLAYED THEIR
SINGLE, BEST BARGAINING CHIP.

9. IT IS UNQUESTIONABLY IN THE LONG-TERM INTERESTS OF IRAN
(AND THE US) FOR TURKEY TO REMAIN A STABLE, WESTERN-ORIENTED
SOCIETY. WE ALSO BELIEVE THE CURRENT CRISES FACING TURKEY
COULD IMPEL IT IN DIRECTIONS INIMICAL TO IRANIAN AND U.S.
INTERESTS. AS SUGGESTED REF C, WE THINK, AS A STARTER, IT
WOULD BE USEFUL TO SUGGEST TO THE IRANIANS THAT THEY CONSIDER
TAKING A MORE FORTHCOMING APPROACH IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH
TURKEY ON QUESTIONS OF OIL SUPPLY AND FINANCING. WHILE THIS
STEP ALONE WOULD NOT OVERCOME TURKISH DOUBTS ABOUT IRANIAN
INTENTIONS--AND WOULD CERTAINLY NOT MAKE TURKS RECEPTIVE
TO IRANIAN ADVICE--, IT MIGHT CONSTITUTE A NECESSARY
PRELIMINARY STEP TO A MORE COMPREHENSIVE EFFORT TO IMPROVE
RELATIONS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ANKARA01722
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780102-1212
Format: TEL
From: ANKARA USEEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197803100/aaaadgph.tel
Line Count: 188
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Litigation History:
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Message ID: 650581b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 ANKARA 1570, 78 STATE 55731, 78 ANKARA 1657
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3101090
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS
TAGS: PEPR, TU, IR, US
To: STATE ATHENS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/650581b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014